2016 Census of Canada

Incomes

Results from the latest Census release show that Alberta had the highest median income among the provinces. Alberta's strong economic expansion in recent years, particularly from substantial investments in the province's resource-based industries, coupled with its young population, has shored up relatively high incomes for individuals and households. Alberta also had the lowest percentage of low-income households provincially in 2015. For the first time, information on income for the 2016 Census was collected directly from administrative data sources, increasing data quality.

Alberta's young population

Alberta has the highest share of its population in the working ages relative to other provinces, which is reflected in its lower median age of 36.7 years, compared to 41.2 years nationally. Alberta also had the lowest proportion of seniors relative to its entire population compared to the other provinces. This has an upward influence on median wages, as workers aged 25 to 64 tend to be most productive.

Chart 1: Alberta leads provinces in individual total median income

Total individual median income, 2005, 2015

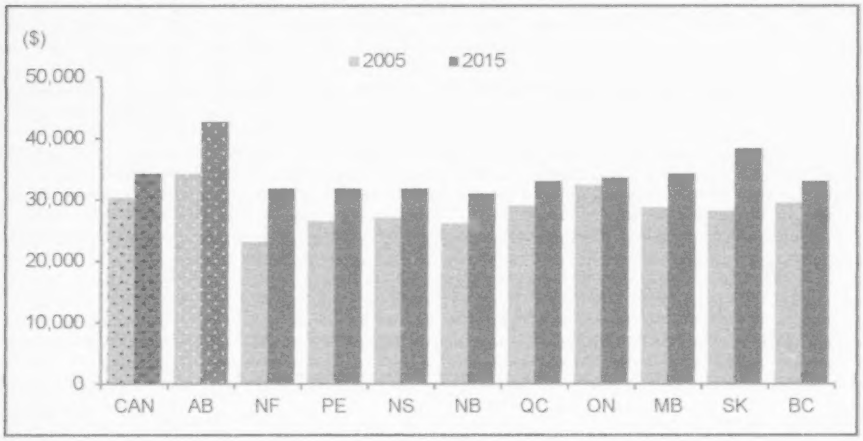
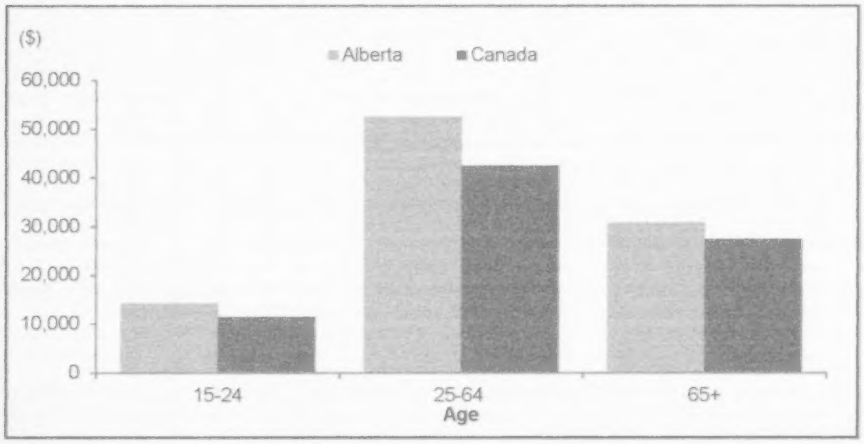


Chart 2: Individual total income higher among Alberta 25 to 64 year olds

Individual total Income across different age groups, 2015



Highest individual income levels among provinces

Individual Income[1] in Alberta in 2015 far outranked other provinces across many categories of comparison, including age and gender. As a whole, individuals in Alberta had a median income of $42,717—over $8,513 more than the Canadian median of $34,204 (Chart 1). Approximately 14% of Albertans' income exceeded $100,000, compared with 8% of Canadians.

Individual median income growth in Alberta was third among the provinces at 25%, trailing Newfoundland (37%) and Saskatchewan (36%). Alberta's compounding annual average growth rate was 2.2%, compared to 1.2% nationally.

Albertans in their prime working years the highest income earners

In Alberta, persons in their prime working years of their life (25 to 64 year olds), earned the highest median income of the provinces at $52,488 compared to a Canadian median of $42,493 (Chart 2). Albertan workers in this age group saw their income grow 21%, compared with 11% nationally. Young Albertans aged 15 to 24 years also earned a higher median income of $ 14,258, compared to $11,505 for Canada as a whole.

1. Refers to 2015 total income (before taxes and deductions) of the 2016 population 15 years or older. The numbers cited in this report are all from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census.

Alberta Government

September 27, 2017

Treasury Board and Finance

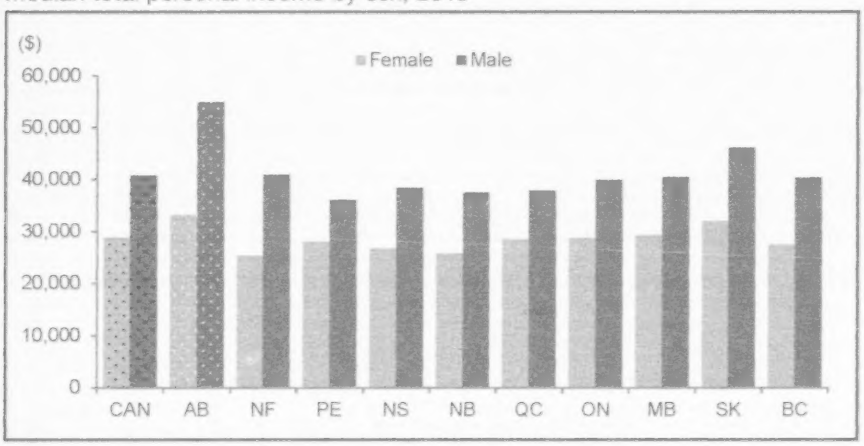
Office of Statistics and Information - Economic Statistics

Alberta incomes high for both genders but income gap persists

Persons of both sexes had a significant earnings advantage in Alberta. Women and men had the highest median incomes across the provinces. Females in Alberta earned a median income of $33,213, compared to the Canadian median of $28,860 (Chart 3). Males in Alberta earned a median income of $54,891, compared with the Canadian median of $40,782. However, the income gap between males and females in Alberta was $21,678, the highest among the provinces. While male wages as a proportion of female wages have shrunk since 2005, there is still a significant gender income gap in Alberta.

Chart 3: Alberta males had highest incomes across provinces

Median total personal income by sex, 2015



Calgary and Edmonton lead metropolitan incomes

At $53,447 and $53,565 Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta's two primary census metropolitan areas both had higher median incomes than all other Canadian census metropolitan areas.

Wood Buffalo incomes far ahead of census agglomerations

Wood Buffalo had by far the highest median income in Alberta at $76,004, surpassing Alberta's median by $33,287 and the Canadian median by a remarkable $41,800. Males and females in Wood Buffalo also had the highest median income in Alberta. However, Wood Buffalo had an exceptionally large gender income gap of $73,631.

Market incomes higher in Alberta

Albertans earned the highest median market income in Canada, at $42,330, compared with Canada's $32,765. This advantage was primarily seen in higher wages and salaries, where Alberta had a median of $44,841, while Canada's was $35,569.

Albertans received the lowest median level of government benefits of all of the provinces, at $4,093, compared with the Canadian median of $5,453. The overall child benefits in Alberta were also the lowest of the provinces, at $2,936, compared with $3,843 nationally.

Only 55.7% of individuals in Alberta received income from government transfers compared to 68.9% in the rest of Canada. This could partially be explained by Alberta's high market income, reducing reliance on income assistance. Compared with Canada, fewer Albertans drew on Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (12.3% compared with 17.5%), as well as Canada Pension Plan (17.1% compared with 23.2%), which is partly due to their younger population. Albertans were also the least likely to receive children's benefits.

Alberta households lead provinces in median incomes

In 2015, families[2] in Alberta reported considerably higher median total[3] incomes than their counterparts in other provinces. Households in Alberta had the highest median total income ($93,835) among all family types, nearly 33% above the national median of $70,336 (Chart 4). Between 2005 and 2015, household income grew more than twice as much in Alberta (24%) as in Canada (11%). Although income growth in other resource-based economies, such as Newfoundland and Labrador (29%) and Saskatchewan (36%), outpaced Alberta's over this decade, Alberta's level was well above both provinces by almost $27,000 and $18,000, respectively. In addition, Alberta's ten-year (2005-2015) compound annual average growth in median income was approximately 2.1%, which exceeded the national growth rate of 1.0%.

Growth in Alberta families in relatively high income brackets

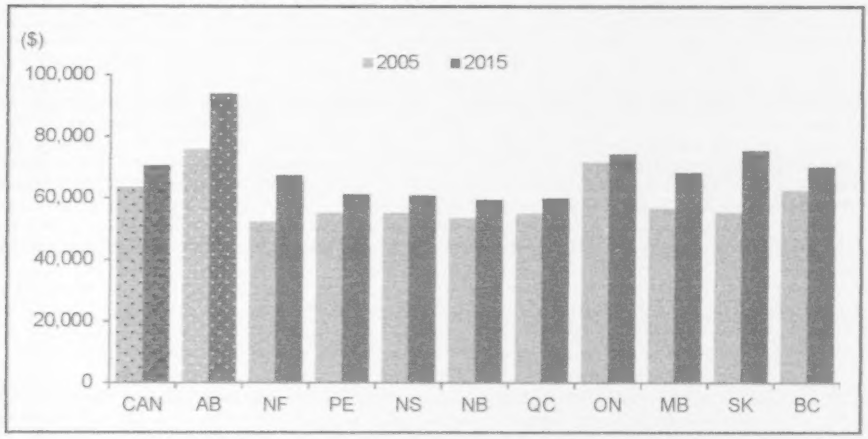
The proportion of Albertan families in relatively high income brackets increased from 2005 to 2015. Whereas about 35% of Alberta households had total incomes of

2. Family here denotes "a census family," which Statistics Canada defines as "... consist[ing]of a married or common law couple with or without children, or of a lone parent with at least one child living in the same dwelling

3. Total income is income from certain sources of all family members in a census family, before taxes and deductions.

Chart 4: Alberta households lead provinces in median incomes

Median total household income, 2005, 2015



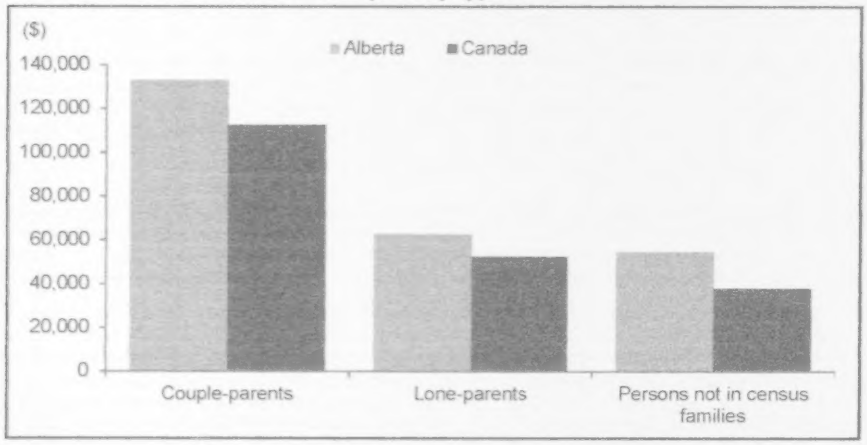
$100,000 and more in 2005, nearly 47% did by 2015; by comparison, 32% of Canadian families had incomes within this bracket in 2015. Almost 70% of Alberta couple families with children reported total household incomes of $100,000 and above in 2015, up from almost 60% in 2005. Similarly, the proportion of lone-parent families in this income bracket rose to 25% in 2015. While approximately 20% of female lone-parents had incomes of $100,00 and above in 2015, up from 12% in 2005, twice as many males (40%) earned well above the overall household income in the province in 2015.

Income distribution among couples: men more likely to earn more

There were 950,210 couple households in Alberta reporting a total income in 2015. Out of those couples, the majority (693,900 or 73%) had a male as the primary earner. A similar trend was observed in the rest of Canada as well. Almost 67% of Alberta couples reported dual employment incomes. On average, the total income share of the higher income earner in the couple household was around 72%. The median total income of the higher income earner in the couple was $75,459, while the median income of the lowest income earner was $28,589.

Chart 5: Median total income higher for all Alberta family types

Median total household income by family type, 2015



In 2015, 6,100 Alberta same-sex couples, of which 2,955 were male and 3,145 female, reported a total income. Same-sex couples were almost entirely dual income recipients, with 3,025 (96%) female couples and 2,810 (95%) males reporting dual incomes. In Alberta, the median income of same-sex couples was slightly higher than those of opposite sex couples (at $109,304). Male same-sex couples also had relatively higher incomes at $118,195 compared to $107,904 for female couples. Among same-sex couples, the higher income spouse received a median income of $78,620, while the lower income spouse had a median income of $37,141. On average, the higher income spouse received 68% of the income.

Alberta family income growth above national

Alberta couple families with children and lone-parents obtained relatively larger incomes than their counterparts across the country, with respective incomes of $132,872 and $62,587, nearly $20,000 and $10,000 more than the Canadian medians (Chart 5). Lone-parent incomes in Alberta rose by about 21% from 2005 to 2015, surpassing the other provinces and the national figure of 14%.

Wide range of incomes across Alberta's regions in 2015

Within Alberta, median household income also varied by regions in 2015. Regional variation was probably influenced by the different types and/or concentrations of industries and jobs in each region. The regions where household income was well above the province's median include: Wood Buffalo ($193,511), Okotoks ($116,163), Cold Lake ($110,575), Calgary ($99,583) and Edmonton ($94,447) (Map 1). Overall, the 2015 household income in Wood Buffalo was more than double the provincial family income and nearly three times the income

of all family types in Canada. Meanwhile, lone-parent families in Wood Buffalo also earned $99,008, almost double their national counterparts.

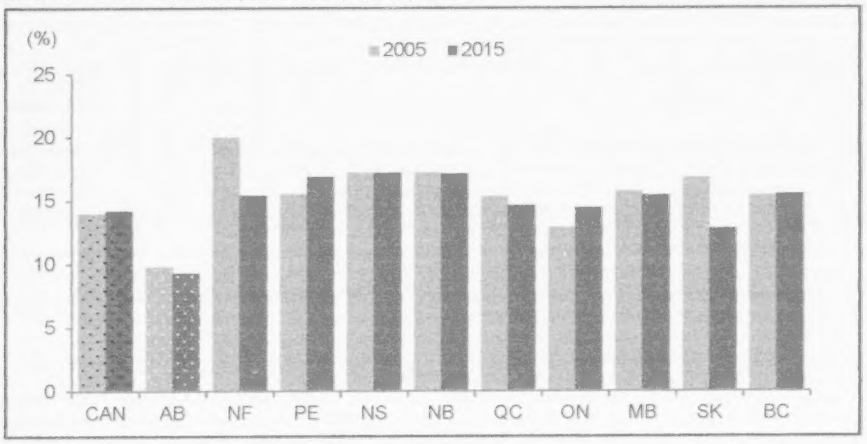
Prevalence of low-income smallest in Alberta

Overall, Alberta reported the lowest prevalence of low income after tax[4] in 2005 (9.8%) and 2015 (9.3%), representing a slight decrease of 0.5% (Chart 6). Across Canada, the rate was generally stable over the decade (14%) but declined the most in Newfoundland and Labrador (-4.6%) and Saskatchewan (-4.0%). While Alberta reported a higher proportion of low income seniors (8.6%) in 2015 than in 2005 (6.2%), its overall prevalence remained the smallest among the provinces.

4. According to Statistics Canada, a low-income household has less than half of the median income of all households.

Chart 6: Prevalence of low-income among provinces lowest in Alberta

Low-income measure, after tax, 2005, 2015



Upcoming 2017 Census of Population Releases

October 25, 2017
Immigration and ethnocultural diversity; Housing; Aboriginal peoples

November 29, 2017
Education, Labour, Journey to work, Language of work, Mobility and migration

Contact

Afiba Nyamekye	780.427.8744
Micah Brown	780.427.8840

Map 1: Median household total incomes across Alberta's Census Agglomerations and Metropolitan Areas